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VILSACK ANNOUNCES TRAVEL TO PHILIPPINES AND CHINA

Will Lead Discussions on Expanding Agricultural Trade and Development with Senior Officials

WASHINGTON, Oct. 19, 2009 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced today that he will travel to Asia October 23-30 to participate in bilateral meetings on agricultural trade and development in China and support a U.S. Trade Mission to the Philippines.

In China, Vilsack will participate in the October 28-29 meeting of the U.S.-China Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade (JCCT) in Hangzhou, along with U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk and Commerce Secretary Gary Locke. The JCCT serves as an important forum for Cabinet-level officials from both countries to resolve trade concerns and enhance economic opportunities and cooperation.

"The United States and China are two of the largest agricultural exporters and the world looks to our two countries for leadership in the trade arena," said Vilsack. "The United States looks forward to our continued friendship and cooperation in our efforts to facilitate trade, which will bring tremendous rewards for both of our nations."

In addition to attending the JCCT, Vilsack will hold private meetings with Chinese government officials in Beijing and visit with U.S. agricultural businesses in Shanghai.

Since accession to the WTO in December 2001, China has become one of the fastest growing markets for U.S. agricultural, fish and forest exports. Exports to China grew from \$2.2 billion in 2001 to \$13.2 billion in 2008. Today, China is the fourth largest market for U.S. agriculture exports, and the largest for soybeans, cotton, hides and skins. China's continued economic growth has the potential to expand demand for U.S. agricultural products.

In the Philippines, Secretary Vilsack will meet with Philippine President Gloria Arroyo, Secretary of Agriculture Arthur C. Yap and other government officials, officially open the Trade Mission, and visit agricultural production and research facilities.

"The Philippines is an important growth market for U.S. exports and investments and the bilateral relationship between the United States and the Philippines is characterized by strong economic and cultural ties," said Vilsack. "This mission will further solidify direct commercial

relations between U.S. and Philippine producers, processors, traders, and investors by providing a forum in which companies can meet to identify business opportunities."

The trade mission to the Philippines is the first for USDA in Southeast Asia. The Philippines is a key market in the region for U.S. agricultural exports, with sales of over \$1.77 billion in 2008, a record high, while U.S. agricultural imports from the Philippines reached \$ 1.24 billion during the same period.

For updates on Vilsack's trip to Asia, visit the USDA Web site at <http://www.usda.gov> .

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